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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Soil Conservation Service

NATIONAL

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CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS

SOIL BANK CAN HELP WILDLIFE

The Soil Bank offers direct benefits to wildlife on the nation's billion plus acres of farm and ranch land.

Cropland placed in the Conservation Reserve will grow vegetation or store water which, for the period of the contracts, will not be disturbed by harvest. Grass may not be grazed or cut, nor trees harvested, except when authorized by the Secretary of Agriculture to cope with emergency or disaster such as drought or flood. Wildlife, however, may be taken from Conservation Reserve acreage, and the farmer may sell hunting or fishing privileges if he wishes.

The goal is 25 million acres in the Conservation Reserve by the end of 1957. This amount of ungrazed, uncut grass, shrubs, and trees, or open water areas, will add materially to agricultural wildlife habitat. Its value will be enhanced by its being interspersed throughout the 478 million acres of cultivated land, i.e., approximately 5 percent of the present cultivated area will be providing undisturbed wildlife cover. The vegetation on each tract will be protected for 3, 5, or 10 years or longer, according to the contract terms.

Land eligible for the Conservation Reserve includes cropland that was tilled or was in regular crop rotation the year before the contract begins, or former cropland that was established in permanent cover other than trees since 1953. The deadline for signing 1957 Conservation Reserve contracts is March 15.

About 70 percent of the land in the United States is privately owned and more than 60 percent is in farms and ranches. Here is where most of our wildlife is produced, along with other agricultural products.

The Conservation Reserve recognizes wildlife as a crop on a par with grass and trees. The farmer placing land in the Reserve has the choice of establishing perennial cover useful as grassland, woodland, or wildlife habitat. Cost-sharing and annual payments on the wildlife land can be as much as the highest offered on the same land for other purposes.

The Conservation Reserve offers three practices "designed primarily to protect and conserve wildlife resources":

G-1. Establishment and management of cover specifically beneficial to wildlife.

G-2. Water and marsh management to benefit fish and wildlife.

G-3. Constructing dams or ponds for fish.

Soil Conservation Service has the technical responsibility for the water-development practices especially to benefit wildlife (G-2 and G-3), the same as for the other soil-bank water practices (B-7 and C-14). This responsi-

bility includes (a) a finding that the practice is needed and practicable on the farm, (b) necessary site selection, other preliminary work, and layout work of the practice, (c) necessary supervision of the installation, and (d) certification of performance.

If in a particular State the specifications for establishing wildlife cover (G-1) are such as to require on-site technical services, the State ASC Committee may assign the technical responsibility either to the Soil Conservation Service or the Forest Service as appropriate.

These provisions offer farmers cost-shares and annual soil-bank payments for essentially the same wildlife improvement practices they have been applying without payment in their soil conservation districts. The Soil Conservation Service will be giving the same kind of technical assistance in wildlife development it has given through district operations. The Service has a staff of biologists to advise field technicians on wildlife problems.

Farmers' and ranchers' interest in wildlife is shown by the extent to which wildlife practices have already been applied in soil conservation districts:

	<u>Newly applied fiscal 1956</u>	<u>On the land Dec. 31, 1955</u>
Wildlife area improvement, acres	402,974	3,470,000
Hedgerow planting, rods	635,242	6,261,000
Farm ponds	78,869	716,000*
Fish pond improvement	56,885	237,000

* Combined figures from SCS and ACPS indicate 1,239,000 ponds have been built with Federal assistance.

Soil-bank payments for the special wildlife practices may be expected to stimulate increased attention by farmers to this phase of conservation.

Wildlife area improvement and hedgerow plantings, which farmers have practiced without cost-sharing in the past, are now eligible for soil-bank payments under Conservation Reserve Practice G-1.

ACP cost-sharing on farm ponds has been restricted to sites where the location of new livestock water would improve distribution of grazing. The Conservation Reserve offers cost-sharing for ponds built specifically for fish, and for creating or managing water areas especially for fish and wildlife.

Woodlands and windbreaks on farms and ranches also benefit wildlife. Cooperators in soil conservation districts have established the following tree plantings, mostly without the benefit of cost-sharing:

	<u>Newly applied fiscal 1956</u>	<u>On the land Dec. 31, 1955</u>
Tree planting, acres	351,479	3,613,000
Windbreak planting, miles	1,687	25,000

These practices will be eligible for cost-sharing in the Conservation Reserve under Practice A-7, "Initial establishment of a stand of trees or shrubs on farmland for erosion control, watershed protection, or forestry purposes". The Forest Service is responsible for the technical phases of this practice.

As with other soil-bank practices, the farmer's participation in wildlife practices is voluntary. Technical services by the SCS will be given in response to farmers' requests, referred to the Service by County ASC Committees. Procedures are similar to those for ACP activities.

The SCS will continue to assist farmers and ranchers with wildlife improvements through district operations.

National and State Conservation Reserve Goals

National conservation reserve goals for 1956 and 1957 are established as follows: 1956, 4,000,000 to 6,000,000 acres; 1957, 20,000,000 acres. Goals for later years will be announced not later than February 1 of each year. The National conservation reserve goals for 1957 are apportioned among States as follows:

	<u>1,000 acres</u>		<u>1,000 acres</u>
Alabama	360	Nebraska	790
Arizona	50	Nevada	17
Arkansas	435	New Hampshire	24
California	495	New Jersey	50
Colorado	640	New Mexico	135
Connecticut	27	New York	450
Delaware	18	North Carolina	275
Florida	125	North Dakota	1,200
Georgia	390	Ohio	480
Idaho	265	Oklahoma	710
Illinois	680	Oregon	260
Indiana	505	Pennsylvania	365
Iowa	900	Rhode Island	4
Kansas	1,385	South Carolina	195
Kentucky	585	South Dakota	620
Louisiana	280	Tennessee	520
Maine	70	Texas	1,680
Maryland	100	Utah	85
Massachusetts	35	Vermont	70
Michigan	485	Virginia	260
Minnesota	735	Washington	430
Mississippi	355	West Virginia	110
Missouri	830	Wisconsin	640
Montana	760	Wyoming	120

Eligible Practices in the Conservation Reserve

- A-2--Initial establishment of a permanent vegetative cover for soil protection or as a needed land-use adjustment.
- A-4--Initial treatment of farmland to permit the use of legumes and grasses for soil improvement and protection. (Cost-sharing for liming materials, rock phosphate or gypsum applied under this practice shall be limited to applications needed in connection with the establishment of eligible vegetative cover.)
- A-7--Initial establishment of a stand of trees or shrubs on farmland for erosion control, watershed protection, or forestry purposes.
- *B-7--Constructing dams, pits, or ponds as a means of protecting vegetative cover. (The use of such water for irrigating land other than the conservation reserve acreage shall not be permitted during the period covered by the contract.)
- *C-14--Constructing dams, pits, or ponds for irrigation water. (The use of such water for irrigating land other than the conservation reserve acreage shall not be permitted during the period covered by the contract.)
- D-1--Establishment of vegetative cover for winter protection from erosion.
- D-2--Establishment of vegetative cover for summer protection from erosion.
- The following eligible practices are designed primarily to protect and conserve wildlife resources:
- G-1--Establishment and management of cover specifically beneficial to wildlife. This practice will have general applicability in all States, although the plant species and cultural and other operations used may differ from State to State and in different sections of the same State. It includes wildlife cover and food plantings, land operations such as partial discing, and a variety of practices designed to improve wildlife habitat.
- *G-2--Water and marsh management to benefit fish and wildlife. This practice includes the development of shallow water areas to improve habitat for waterfowl, fur animals and other wildlife as well as restoration of drained areas (formerly marshland) by installing earth plugs or water control structures in drainage ditches.
- *G-3--Constructing dams or ponds for fish.
- * SCS has technical responsibility for these practices.

